

Application Serial No. 10/735,400

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Claims 1-20 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Stiles in view of Tanaka.

Final Rejection

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the finality of this Office Action. According to section 706.07(a) of the MPEP, a second action on the merits shall be final, except where the examiner introduces a new ground of rejection that is neither necessitated by applicant's amendment of the claims nor based on information submitted in an information disclosure statement (IDS) filed during the period set forth in 37 CFR 1.97(c).

These references were not based on information submitted in an IDS. Furthermore, Applicants' Amendment of June 14, 2007 amended claims 1 and 11 to change "at least one control input" to "a plurality of control inputs." The change from singular to plural is so minor that it did not require the Examiner to perform a new search. Consequently, this Amendment did not necessitate a new ground of rejection. Applicants respectfully request that the finality of this Office Action be withdrawn.

103 Rejection

Claim 1 recites a video game controller hub, comprising means for providing at least one reduced control input set to a video game console, wherein each reduced control input set determines an action of a separate on-screen entity and video game controllers

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collectively control at least one on-screen entity. For example, if the hub was used to control an input set from five users playing a racing video game, a team of three could control the race car by averaging their inputs so that if one user commanded rapid acceleration, another user commanded no acceleration, and a third user commanded mild acceleration, the resulting acceleration would be moderate. See pages 10-11.

Stiles discloses a control system for pilots that determines the priority level for a pilot and co-pilot for variables such as yaw, pitch, roll, and lift axes of an aircraft. Column 3, lines 39-65. The Examiner concedes that Stiles does not disclose a video game controller hub. Tanaka discloses an entertainment device and controllers where the controllers have display portions that provide a display recognizable by the players. [0032] and [0034]. The display provides information correlating the individual controllers with game characters. [0035]. Each player maintains full control of his character and does not share control of that character with any other player. [0035].

Neither Stiles nor Tanaka teach or suggest a reduced control input set that determines an action of a separate on-screen entity, or collective control of such an entity. The Examiner asserts that Tanaka's statement: "For a game to be enjoyed by a plurality of players through such individual operations of the controllers, it is necessary that correlation between the individual game characters appear[ing] on a television monitor" teaches that "said video game controllers collectively control at least one on-screen entity." Pages 3-4. However, the rest of Tanaka after "on a television monitor" reads: "and the individual controllers for operating such game characters can be recognized by

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the players by themselves. The game will never proceed smoothly if the players cannot recognize by themselves that which game character is controlled by which controller, so that it is particularly important for such game that the correlation between the game characters and the controllers can be recognized by the players." [0004]-[0005].

The "correlation" described in Tanaka is visual linking of an individual controller with a character on the screen that is solely controlled by that individual controller, thus identifying to the player which character he, and he alone, is controlling. This is fundamentally different than Applicant's claimed collective control, where a single character or entity is controlled by multiple players. In Tanaka, each player maintains full control of her character. Tanaka never teaches or discloses collective or shared control of a single on-screen entity.

To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, the combination of references must teach or suggest all of the claim limitations. Here, even if there was motivation to combine Stiles and Tanaka, the combination fails to teach or suggest a means for providing a reduced control input set that determines an action of a separate on-screen entity, or collective control of such an entity. Applicants therefore respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 8 and 18 recite a controller hub wherein the on-screen entity comprises any of a vehicle, a character, and a team. In reference to these claims, the Examiner states that "Stiles discloses a system substantially equivalent to applicant's claimed invention."

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However, as the Examiner has already conceded, Stiles fails to teach a video controller hub. Stiles is therefore not substantially equivalent.

Claims 9, 10, 19, and 20 recite a controller hub wherein the combination scheme is specified by a user of said video game console through a user interface. In reference to these claims, the Examiner states that "Stiles discloses said reduction scheme and combination scheme that are specified by a user of said video game console through a user interface." However, as the Examiner previously conceded, Stiles fails to teach a video controller hub.

Claim 11 recites a method for reducing a plurality of control input sets wherein at least one control input set determines an action of a separate on-screen entity. For the same reasons as explained above, the combination of Stiles and Tanaka fail to teach or suggest at least the claim limitation of a plurality of control input sets wherein at least one reduced control input set determines an action of a separate on-screen entity, resulting in collective control of said entity. Because claims 2-10 and 12-20 all depend on either claim 1 or claim 11, they are patentable for at least the same reasons.

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Conclusion

Applicants respectfully posit that the pending claims have been distinguished from the art of record, and that the rejection of the claims has been overcome. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request allowance of all claims. The Examiner is invited to please contact Applicants' agent at (650) 474-8400 should any questions arise.

Respectfully submitted,



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